



The Board of Park and Recreation Commissioners of Mecklenburg County, North Carolina, met at the Administrative Office Building, located at 5841 Brookshire Blvd., Charlotte, NC 28216 on June 9, 2015 at 6 p.m.

PRC MINUTES
August 11, 2015
ATTENDANCE

PRC Present:

Elaine Powell, Chair
 Kendel Bryant, Vice Chair
 Tristan McMannis, Executive Secretary
 Sheryl Smith
 Doug Burnett
 John Leonard
 Ed Barnhart
 Aubin Guinness

Jim Garges, Director, Park and Recreation
 Michael Kirschman, Deputy Director, Park and Recreation

PRC Absent:

Vacant – At Large
 Vacant – At Large
 Vacant – Central 2
 Vacant – Central 3
 Vacant – North 2

Call to Order:

The meeting was called to order at 6:09 p.m. by Chair Elaine Powell, which was followed by the pledge of allegiance.

Welcome and Introductions:

Chair Powell welcomed all to the August 2015 PRC meeting and asked each Commissioner/Staff person to introduce themselves. Deputy Director Michael Kirschman, welcomed **John Leonard**, newly appointed Park and Recreation Commissioner representing the South 3 Park Region. John, a native of NC, shared his work history and special interest, including membership on Charlotte EAST, interest in wellness and health, aging and elder care, education, nature, preservation, biodiversity, exercise and parks as community spaces.

Proclamations, Recognitions and Awards:

Alvin Simpson – 2015 Carolinas Boxing Hall of Fame Inductee: Terri Stowers, Division Director of Community and Recreation Center Services and Marquisha Clayburn, Facility Manager, introduced and recognized Coach Al Simpson, Boxing Recreation Specialist, at Revolution Park Sports Academy. Al was recently inducted into the Carolina Boxing Hall of Fame. His nomination was based on his outstanding work in coaching boxers to State, Regional, National and World titles. Coach Al will also be nominated and inducted into the Women's Boxing Hall of Fame as one of the first male coaches to coach the first U.S. Female Team to the World Cup in 2001. Coach Al has pushed hard for female boxing to be included in the Olympics, which came to pass in 2012 with a first ever US Female Team, which won Gold and Silver medals. Mecklenburg County Park and Recreation is the only recreation department in North Carolina fortunate enough to have a boxing program.

Norman Mitchell – PRC Award: Norman Mitchell, outgoing Park and Recreation Commissioner, was recognized and presented with an award for his outstanding service to the Park and Recreation Commission. Norman served as the At Large from 2009 – 2015. Many accolades and well wished were offered by members of the Park and Recreation Commission.

Program/Staff Presentations:

Capital Planning – Where do Parks Come From? – Lee Jones

Lee Jones, Division Director of Capital Planning, shared a presentation on the process of bringing a park to life from the idea and rendering through planning, funding, land acquisition, consultant selection, developing the conceptual plan, obtaining community input, to construction, ground breaking and dedication.

Deputy Kirschman shared further that it is difficult for the public to understand that from the point of land acquisition, funding and county approval for the project; it can be several years to completion. The Department currently has 65 capital projects under design or construction some of which may have started with a land purchase 10 years ago.

Commissioner Smith inquired about land donations. Deputy Kirschman responded these are the best kinds of land acquisition, but that not all donations are accepted if they don't meet our needs.

Commissioner Bryant inquired about the 3 public meeting requirements. Lee Jones responded that 3 public meetings is a Department standard and depending on the size and difficulty of the project, it could be 1 public meeting or it could be 5, but is an internal policy to make sure we are getting the appropriate input from the public.

Additional concerns were raised regarding future Park and Recreation bond referendums, funds for land acquisition and park projects.

Deputy Kirschman provided some background and updates surrounding these issues as follows:

- **Future Park Bond Referendums and the 2008 Bonds.** There will be no future Park and Recreation bond referendums. Going forward, all park projects will be paid for with paygo funds (cash). The 2008 bonds have expired and any projects not completed that were included in the 2008 bonds have been ranked into the new 3-year capital project ranking system and or will be included in the next ranking.

- **Capital Project Ranking Process:** After the County came out of the recession, they changed the method by which they fund capital projects. Departments fill out a ranking form for each of their capital projects and then they are all ranked against each other and earmarked for funding in year 1, 2 or 3. Each of these years is allotted \$130 million and certain projects for funding. The process has worked well, but some changes will most likely be made for the next round of rankings to more equitably balance projects throughout the three years and to hopefully allow Departments to keep their internal project rankings. (In the first 3-year ranking process, the Department was only funded one park project in the first year, three in the second year and 32 projects in the 3rd year.)
- **Funding for Land Acquisition:** Since coming out of the recession, the County now budgets 5% off the top of the County's entire capital budget each year for land acquisition.

Abersham/Allison-Fisher Farm Park West Branch Rocky River Greenway:

Lee Jones brought before the Commission a request for endorsement of the Immediate Needs Site Plan for Abersham/Allison-Fisher Farm Park West Branch Rocky River Greenway, which is primarily to take care of the infrastructure and make the entire site usable. After several meetings with the community, Davidson Parks and Recreation Manager, North Advisory Councils and the Davidson Town Manager, this immediate needs site plan was approved by the Davidson Town Board on 8/11/2015. (**NOTE:** A copy of the immediate needs site plan is included in the August 11, 2015 PRC Minutes Binder, **Section 4b1 and 4b2**, housed in the Director's office.)

The following concerns were addressed as brought up by the Park and Recreation Commissioners.

- **Property Name:** The current lengthy title for the property is the result of several pieces of property that come together as one property. Through the proper process the name can be changed at a later time.
- **Road Network:** The existing road network, which was a source of contention at several of the community meeting, will be a one-way continuous loop through the property and designated for pedestrians and vehicular traffic in certain areas. ATV's will not be allowed.
- **Dog Park:** Another source of contention was plans for a dog park on this property, which many people were against. Currently most dogs on this property are off-leash. As a County owned property, by ordinance, dogs must be leashed. The only exception would be in a dog park.

Motion was made by Commissioner Bryant to endorse the Immediate Needs Site Plan for Abersham/Allison-Fisher Farm Park West Branch Rocky River Greenway, which was seconded by Commissioner Smith and approved unanimously.

Director's Report

The following topics were addressed in the Director's Report:

- **Memorial Stadium/Grady Cole Update:** Improvements to Memorial Stadium and Grady Cole are included in the 2008 Master Plan and the updated Master Plan. Director Garges reported that planning for these improvements was jumpstarted by the collapse of the tunnel under Memorial Stadium approximately 3 years ago and the increased interest in major league soccer. The Department is currently at a point where they have an

opportunity to expand and improve the stadium and Grady Cole working with many partners including the City of Charlotte, Charlotte Regional Visitors Authority, the Historic Landmarks Commission, the American Legion, Central Piedmont Community College and the private sector. The vision is a remodeled Memorial Stadium very similar to the original but would have a field to accommodate all sports and events with eventual seating of up to 18,000 and a new field house, plus an important historical component. The next step is to get all the players together and sign a contract to move into design and development.

Commissioner Bryant inquired about the Confederate monument and the Park and Recreation Department's responsibility. Director Garges responded that the monument is on County Property and that reasonable steps will be taken to protect it.

- **Biddleville Cemetery:** The Biddleville neighborhood residents have recently expressed interest in revitalizing the cemetery as well as concerns associated with less than desirable activities in and around the cemetery and the Five Points Park. As a result, Jeff Robinson, Division Director of Park Operations, and Director Garges met with Commissioner Leake and Councilmember Austin along with residents of the neighborhood to discuss possibilities for the revitalization. Ideas include: working with the church for records of burial, development of an information kiosk, working with the Historic Landmarks Commission, finish and continue clean-up, get as many graves identified as possible, install appropriate fencing, possible lighting and clearing out more of the woods surrounding the cemetery.

Commissioner Burnett asked if the City of Charlotte might not be better equipped to maintain cemeteries. Director Garges said he felt that was true for the large cemeteries but not necessarily for the small pocket cemeteries such as this. The Department can give the extra attention to detail needed. This would be similar to the other historic sites maintained by the Department.

Commissioner Smith suggested reaching out to the students of Johnson C. Smith University to engage them in a service project of researching the unmarked graves. Commissioner Smith said she would reach out to Dr. Carter for his engagement.

- **Master Plan Update:** Deputy Director Kirschman shared that the Master Plan update has been presented to all of the Advisory Councils and will soon complete individual presentations to each of the BOCC. Once this is complete the updated Master Plan will be placed on the BOCC agenda for their approval and then on to be presented to the towns and the City of Charlotte.

Chair Powell asked that the Park and Recreation Commissioners be advised, as much as is possible, of meetings that would be appropriate for them to attend.

- **October PRC Meeting Date Change:** It was suggested that the October 20 PRC meeting be changed to October 13. All agreed to the change.
- **Paralympics Team Trials:** The Paralympics Team Trials are coming to Charlotte, June 27 – July 3, 2016. Partners for Parks will be involved and many of our Charlotte and Department venues will be utilized.

- **PRC Attendance Records:** Each of the Commissioners were provided with an attendance record of the meetings for which they are responsible for attending. All were reminded of the 75% attendance policy set by the BOCC. Meeting responsibilities and adjustments will be made after PRC appointments are made by the BOCC. Deputy Director Michael Kirschman encouraged reaching out to the BOCC with their recommendations for appointment to the current PRC vacancies. Chair Powell has done this.

Consent Items

Motion was made by Commissioner McMannis to approve all consent items, including the Park and Recreation Commission minutes of June 9, 2015, which was seconded by Commissioner Burnett, and approved unanimously.

PRC Reports and Requests

Chair Elaine Powell shared the following:

Contract Summer Camps vs. Park and Recreation Summer Camps: In response to a recent visit to the Arbor Glenn Recreation Center, Chair Powell asked if Terri Stowers, Division Director of Community and Recreation Center Services, would explain the difference between the contracted camps and the Park and Recreation camps. Terri responded that because of staffing restraints, the Department contracts with different agencies to provide summer camps in our facilities. These camps are run at a lower cost or in some cases no cost, to the participants. (The Boys and Girls Club at Southview and the WYCA Camp at Tuckaseegee offer summer camps at no cost.) The agency is responsible for all aspects of the camp, including staffing, all materials and provisions and clean-up. However, Park and Recreation staff works closely with them on curriculum, helping with implementing HEPA standards, assisting with arrangements for trips to Nature Preserves and the incorporation of 4-H programs, for example.

Park and Recreation does run 3 traditional summer camps, sports camps at Revolution, 2 teen camps, some skate board camps and Nature Center camps.

Moth Night – Sherman Branch Nature Preserve/Trail Blazers: Chair Powell, brought to the attention of the Commission and staff, that during a recent “Moth Night” at Sherman Branch Nature Preserve, they were confronted by a person from the Trail Blazers. Thinking they were “camping” he treated them in an abrasive manner as if they were trespassers. This confrontation also brought to light that the Trail Blazers had removed 90 pieces of tin throughout the preserve, not knowing they were placed there as part of a research project. While, Chair Powell expressed true appreciation for all our partners, she felt it important to bring this issue up as a reminder that our partners are on County property.

Chris Matthews, Division Director of Nature Preserves and Natural Resources, has addressed this issue with the Trail Blazers and well as staff. Staff will do a better job of identifying research projects and communicating with our partners.

NACPRO Awards: Commissioners Powell, Smith and McMannis attended the NACPRO awards banquet at which the Department received an environmental conservation award for the Little Sugar Creek Greenway project and a host award.

Staff Report

Bike Path Country Presentation:

Deputy Director, Michael Kirschman, presented information on Bike Path Country and requested the Commission's endorsement for the Department to enter into a short term agreement with them to use their services along some of the Department's greenways. Michael shared a PowerPoint which explained the following regarding Bike Path Country:

Bike Path Country specializes in working with Park and Recreation Departments to place signs along greenways that incorporate sponsorship ads and brings revenue into the Department.

Bike Path Country designs, builds, installs and maintains the signs according to our specifications and seeks out sponsors that match the Department's mission and philosophy. Sign cost is recouped up front through the sponsorship fees by Bike Path Country after which the Department would receive an annual check from the sponsorship revenue.

The Department already sells sponsorships and allows signage in ball fields, dog parks and inside the Aquatic Center. The plan is to start very small along 3 greenways and see how it goes.

Pros and cons were discussed by the Commissioners:

- The signs would fill a need for wayfinding.
- Besides sponsorship ads, the ad space on the signs could advertise Department events and programs.
- Would address one of the Master Plan goals of increasing cost recovery.
- The ads would assist in helping to identify a location along the greenway in the case of an emergency
- Compared to the cost of a greenway, it doesn't seem that this would be a significant cost recovery.
- Greenways and parks should be a place of peace and rest, not commercialized by ads.
- A good way to subsidize the cost of signage and cost recovery.
- Include a user based survey to determine how sponsorship ads along the greenway affected the experience

Following the discussion, it was decided that no action would be taken until this presentation was made to the Greenway Advisory Council. (**NOTE:** The PowerPoint presentation can be found in the August 11, 2015 PRC Minutes binder, **section 13a**, housed in the Director's office.)

Park Commissioners Reports and Requests:

Commissioner Guinness – Capital Budget: Commissioner Guinness inquired about the status of the capital budget. Director Garges responded that the capital budget and the operating budget are approved separately by the BOCC. First, all of the capital projects that are scheduled for a particular year are approved and then anything that is new. The capital budget for the Department was approved and included the following:

- FY16 Scheduled projects
- \$4.3 million added for deferred maintenance needed at existing capital projects
- \$5.3 million for the Queens Tennis Complex project
- \$3.4 million for the 2nd Ward Gym

Commissioner Bryant – Hickory Grove Summer Camp: Commissioner Bryant commended the Department and staff on the Hickory Grove Summer Camp, which her godson attended. She shared that he had a great time, but was completely exhausted each day and inquired about a time of rest during camp. Terri Stowers, Division Director of Community and Recreation Centers, responded that they did include quite time each day and some even had yoga.

Commissioner McMannis – Sr. Citizen Advisory Council: Commission McMannis reported that at the last Sr. Citizen Advisory Council meeting, it was agreed to increase the membership from 9 members to 11 members. Since Park and Recreation has taken on the responsibility of running the Senior Games, the Sr. Citizen Advisory Council felt it would be important to bring in members to the Council that formerly assisted with the Sr. Games.

Motion was made by Commissioner McMannis to increase the number of positions for the Sr. Citizens Advisory Council from the current 9 members to 11 members, which was seconded by Commissioner Bryant and approved unanimously.

Commissioner Smith – Lincoln Heights Neighborhood Association: Commissioner Smith expressed her appreciation to Director Garges for attending a recent Lincoln Heights Neighborhood Association to answer questions from the association members regarding the park. Commissioner Smith also commended the Department for the quick response to take care of yellow jacket nest found in the raised bed gardens.

Adjournment

The meeting adjourned at 9 p.m.